

6

The Kingdom of Italy 1861–70

POINTS TO CONSIDER

This chapter considers the condition of the Italian people during the years between the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and the events that finally completed the process of unification in 1870. It assesses how the new Italian state functioned during its first decade, examining the problems it faced, the policies it pursued, and the economic and social progress that was made. Overall, the chapter enables you to assess whether life improved for Italians, and therefore whether unification had been worthwhile. It is split into the following sections:

- The Kingdom of Italy
- Social and economic problems

Key dates

1861	March	The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed
1861–5		Civil war in southern Italy
1864		<i>The Syllabus of Errors</i> published
1866		Venetia was added to Kingdom of Italy
1870	July	The Doctrine of Papal Infallibility
	October	Rome was added to Italy and became its capital

1 | The Kingdom of Italy

After the proclamation of Victor Emmanuel II as King of Italy in May 1861, Piedmont's Prime Minister d'Azeglio remarked: 'Italy is made, now we must make Italians'. It was a pertinent remark. Victor Emmanuel II, scornful of his new subjects, who did not seem to understand that they now belonged to the 'nation' of which he was head, voiced his opinion that 'There are only two ways of governing Italians, by bayonets and by bribery'.

Key question

How did the new Kingdom of Italy function during the first decade of its existence?

The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed:
March 1861

Key date

The Kingdom of Italy 1859–70. Dates in brackets indicate when each state was unified with Piedmont.



Key question

What were the steps by which unification was completed after 1861?

Key dates

Venetia was added to Kingdom of Italy: 1866

Rome was added to Italy and became its capital: October 1870

The road to political unification

In March 1861 the new Kingdom of Italy was officially proclaimed. Yet unification was not complete. Not until 1866 was Venetia successfully won back from Austria with the help of Napoleon III of France, despite Italy's poor performance in the war. Garibaldi made two unsuccessful attempts in 1862 and 1867 to invade and take Rome, but it was not until 1870 that the city became part of a united Italy when Napoleon III ordered his occupying troops to withdraw because they were needed to defend France against Prussia.

The city of Rome was the obvious natural capital of Italy and failure to include it in 1861 had been a grave disappointment to Italian liberals. Now, in 1870, disappointment turned to joy as Rome was at last declared the capital. Italian troops were welcomed as they marched in to replace the French garrison, which had long been an unwanted foreign presence in the city.

Key question

In what ways did the Papacy cause problems for the new Italian state?

The Papacy

Pope Pius IX did not join in the rejoicing, and his policies caused grave problems for the new Italian state.

Already, in 1860, Pius had lost the majority of the land making up the Papal States (see page 66). As worldly power began to slip from his grasp, he concentrated on strengthening his spiritual power over the Church and its members. In 1864 the man who had once been thought progressive published the controversial *Syllabus of Errors*, which, turning the Church away from the material world, condemned, among other things, 'progress, liberalism and modern civilisation'. He was also against religious toleration. In July 1870 he went further with the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility, which decreed that the Pope's spiritual judgement on matters of faith and morals could not be challenged as he was the supreme judge of truth for the Catholic Church.

Now, three months later, Rome became the capital city of Italy and the Pope, distressed by what he called 'the triumph of disorder and the victory of wicked revolution', found himself left with only 109 acres of land making up the area called the Patrimony of Saint Peter. He retired into his palace of the Vatican, describing himself as its 'prisoner'. He was offered a state pension but refused it, and instead excommunicated Victor Emmanuel and the government.

Pius IX was determined to demonstrate his continued spiritual importance. As head of the Catholic Church, he announced that any Catholics who took part in Italian politics or worked for the new secular state would be excommunicated.

Through its beliefs, rituals and language, the Catholic Church had always been the main unifying element within the country. Now, even though Catholicism remained the state religion, those many liberal-minded Catholics who supported the new secular government but who wished also to keep the faith, found themselves in difficulties. The old balanced relationship between Church and State no longer existed. It threatened instead to become a bitter clash of personalities and values, as over the next two decades the Pope became ever more hostile to the Italian state.

Political problems

Apart from the question of the Pope, the government found itself with a number of other problems, which the poor qualities of most of Cavour's successors as prime minister during the 1860s did nothing to help. None was charismatic, none had the leadership qualities of the heroes of the *Risorgimento*, and many remained in power for only a short time. One prime minister, Luigi Farini, who suffered a mental breakdown, tried to stab the king and was removed from office after only three months, and Urbano Rattazzi became involved in Garibaldi's failed attacks on Rome in 1862 and 1867 and was forced to resign.

Nevertheless, Italian historians argue that, in their own way, members of the Italian governments in the 1860s and 1870s did good work establishing the new kingdom and that they were just as successful and important as those of earlier years. In 1928 the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce wrote a spirited defence of

The Syllabus of Errors
published: 1864

Doctrine of Papal
Infallibility: July 1870

Key dates

Key question
What political issues
caused problems for
the Italian
government?

Key question
How dominant was
Piedmont in the new
Italy?

these governments as made up of 'men of noble and self-sacrificing character' and 'upright and loyal gentlemen'. Other historians, however, such as the Communist Antonio Gramsci, described them as essentially undemocratic. It is easy to see why he thought this if we look at the constitution of the new state.

Italy's constitution

The Italy of 1861 was a constitutional monarchy, not the republic that Mazzini had dreamed about and worked for, nor a federation under the Pope as Gioberti and later Cavour and Napoleon III had proposed at Plombières. The constitution was based on Charles Albert's *Statuto* of 1848 (see page 53), and the Piedmontese example was closely followed. It was the King of Piedmont who became Italy's King, Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont becoming Victor Emmanuel II of Italy – no matter that he was the *first* King of Italy. Ultimate constitutional power lay with the king in parliament and not 'the people' as Mazzini had hoped. As a result, Mazzini described the new Italian state as a 'sham'.

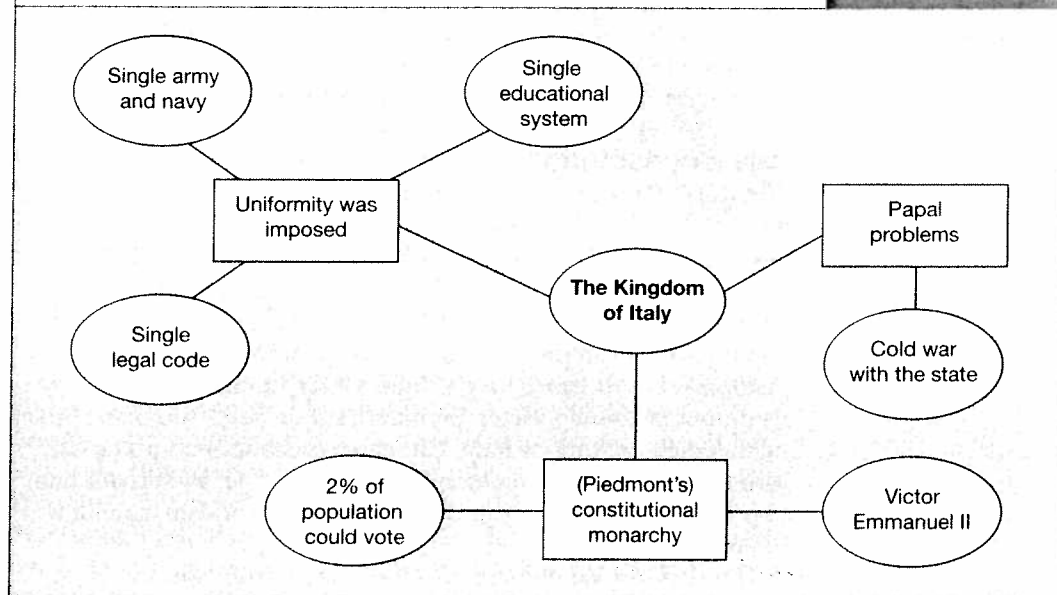
The new regime did not turn Italy into a true democracy, but only into what has been described a sham democracy. The government was made up of members of the Piedmontese nobility and of the educated middle-class minority who formed an élite, and the all-male parliament was elected by a very narrow framework of voters. These too were all male, over 25 years old, literate and tax-paying – about two per cent of the population – and most of them from northern Italy. It was not surprising that parliament consisted almost entirely of well-to-do traditionally minded liberals and was totally unrepresentative of the mass of the people.

Signs of change

However, some progress was made towards a more unified nation:

- The various legal codes, or collections of laws, of individual states were formed into a single criminal code based on that of Piedmont and quickly introduced everywhere except Tuscany, which kept its own moderate code. In 1865 a single system of civil law, similar to France's *Code Napoléon*, was adopted throughout the country. It allowed civil marriage, although divorce remained illegal.
- During the 1860s a unified Italian army was formed out of the old armies of Piedmont, Naples and the central Italian states, plus Garibaldi's 'Army of the South'. The whole army was modernised and reorganised along Prussian lines.
- The navies of Piedmont and Naples were amalgamated into a single force, although not until 1876 was there any attempt at modernising or reorganising it.
- Schools and universities came under state control as part of a policy to provide a unified system of education throughout the peninsula.

Summary diagram: The Kingdom of Italy



2 | Social and Economic Problems

North and south

The government was faced with serious geographical, social, political and economic problems by the need to unite two very different areas of the country: the prosperous, semi-industrialised 'advanced' north, comprising Piedmont and her immediate neighbours, and the poor, agriculturally based 'backward' south, the regions to the south of the Papal States.

Cavour had realised the enormous problems involved in uniting northern and southern Italy, claiming that that 'To harmonise the north with the south is more difficult than to fight Austria or to struggle with Rome'.

Key question

What were the main contrasts between northern and southern Italy?

The land question

The new government in the north at first tried to deal with the problem by ignoring it. When that did not work it used the quite unsuitable solution of forcing a Piedmontese style of government on the south. It was unsuitable because, in Naples and Sicily, the problems were not so much political as social and economic. The majority of the population was illiterate, and lived in poverty and squalor, at a level of near starvation.

As the small number of great landowners continued to enclose land to add to their estates, known as *Latifundia*, there was less and less land left available for the peasants. When the old **common land** disappeared into the great estates, peasant families could not feed themselves as they had done before, for they did not now have land on which to graze cattle or to grow crops.

Key question

Why did so much common land disappear?

Latifundia

Large estates (from the Latin *latus* meaning wide, and *fundus* meaning estate).

Common land

Land held 'in common' by the people, without individual owners.

Key terms

Key question
Why was violence so common in the 1860s?

Key date
Civil war in southern Italy: 1861–5

Key term
Mafia
An organised criminal gang, originating as a secret society in thirteenth-century Sicily. In the nineteenth century it took this name (meaning 'swank') and virtually ruled parts of the island, sometimes protecting ordinary peasants from the oppression of corrupt police forces and judges.

Law and order

The government again showed its total lack of understanding of the situation by introducing higher taxation. The cost of living rose and the quality of peasant life fell even lower as they struggled to pay the new taxes. Their life was further complicated by new, difficult-to-understand legal systems and, worst of all, by conscription which took the young men away from the farms where they were needed. In 1861 around 25,000 of them took to the hills of Naples and Sicily to avoid military service. They scraped a living as bandits instead. Many in the west of Sicily joined the **Mafia** which, taking advantage of the general social unrest, was thriving, as public opinion in the south turned not just against the landowners but also against Victor Emmanuel II and Piedmont.

Peasant families began migrating to the towns in search of work and, often finding none, became part of the growing underclass of semi-destitute people whose only hope of food and shelter was to turn to crime. This was particularly the case in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, and in the overcrowded city of Naples, where the respectable citizens were 'put in fear of their lives' by half-starved beggars.

Civil war

In the early 1860s law and order, never very strong in Sicily and Naples, broke down totally. Bandits became bolder and more numerous as rural discontent fuelled a revolution which soon turned into a civil war in which more people were killed than in all the revolutions and wars of the unification period. A Piedmontese army of some 100,000 men was called in to suppress the disorder. It took them over four years, from 1861 to 1865, to do so.

Government reactions

Government ministers still made no real attempt to understand what was happening in the south. Naples, they believed, was 'rotten'. Neapolitans were 'barbarians': idle, politically corrupt and backward. They brought their troubles on themselves by their laziness, sitting about in the sun instead of working. At the root of the government's attitude was belief in the rightness of Cavour's original plan to reorganise the whole peninsula on the Piedmontese model, and in the idea that the south held great wealth, just waiting for the north to take and use it. On both counts they were wrong, and attempts to put them into practice only had the effect of increasing the growth of industry in the north while making matters socially and economically worse in the south. Throughout the 1860s north and south remained as far apart as ever.

The standard of living

Living standards fell throughout Italy for all social classes as the government struggled to balance the books. In the mid-1860s, when Venetia was added to the kingdom, the government's total spending exceeded its income by 60 per cent.

The level of taxation was decided not by parliament but by the king alone, and unfortunately his main interest was in making war, the most expensive activity any country can indulge in. To pay for his military activities taxes had to rise, and in 1868 the unpopular tax on grinding corn was revived. The increased taxes fell most heavily on peasants, who could least afford to pay. Many, finding that they could not survive on the produce of their few acres, moved into the towns, as large numbers of others had done before them.

The place of women

Extensive research has been done on this topic in recent decades by Italian historians. After unification, women found themselves at first, as they had been before, second-class citizens in a macho society, both in the home, where in all social classes a wife was legally subject to her husband, and in the workplace, where working women were actively discouraged from joining the new **mutual-aid societies** which were the forerunners of trade unions. In 1862 only about 10,000 women, as opposed to about 100,000 men, were members, and women continued to be paid half as much as men for the same work and the same long hours.

In the 1860s in the towns, the availability of cheap housing close to factories, which is where most of the work was available, became very important to working women. They were no longer restricted to outwork in the home or to labouring in quarries, in fields or on the roads. Until the 1870s women continued to work at home, especially once the **treadle** sewing machine came into use, but increasing numbers of women moved into the factories.

Women's work

For many the work was making cigars, a job done exclusively by women. In one of the 20 state-owned factories, 500 workers produced 700 kilograms of cigars a day. The hours were long and the pay was low, but there was company in the rows of workers sitting side by side on high stools in the large, warm rooms. Yet there was widespread tuberculosis, caused by the overcrowded and unsanitary housing of the poor and by the fact that workers were undernourished. There was no treatment. It only needed one infected woman to be working in an unventilated workroom and dozens alongside her would catch the disease. Factory records show that hundreds of women on their books died from tuberculosis.

Unfortunately almost every job women turned their hands to brought them illness and deformity, whether it was making leather gloves on a cumbersome sewing machine, which meant hours of working in a cramped position; or catching a fever standing in dirty and cold stagnant water up to their waists for

Key question

How did government policies increase poverty?

Key question

How were women exploited in this period?

Mutual-aid societies

Organisations formed by workers who pooled their resources to provide some financial benefits in times of hardship.

Treadle

A foot-operated lever that applies power to a machine.

hours at a time soaking flax and hemp ready for spinning; or working along with their children in the newly planted rice fields of Piedmont and Lombardy, their feet and legs in muddy water from one hour after dawn until one hour before sunset as they tended the rice plants. As a result, death from malaria was common among the rice workers.

Working in hazardous conditions in the factories seemed preferable to many women. In Piedmont alone 36,000 women worked in the silk industry in factories where their hands were ruined by boiling water in the process of reeling the silk thread off the cocoons.

The old domestic standbys of spinning and weaving came to an end when competition from the new cotton cloth imports shook the textile industry to its foundations and led to change. From the late 1860s onwards, cloth production moved into the factory and into the machine age, producing unexpected effects on family life.

The family unit

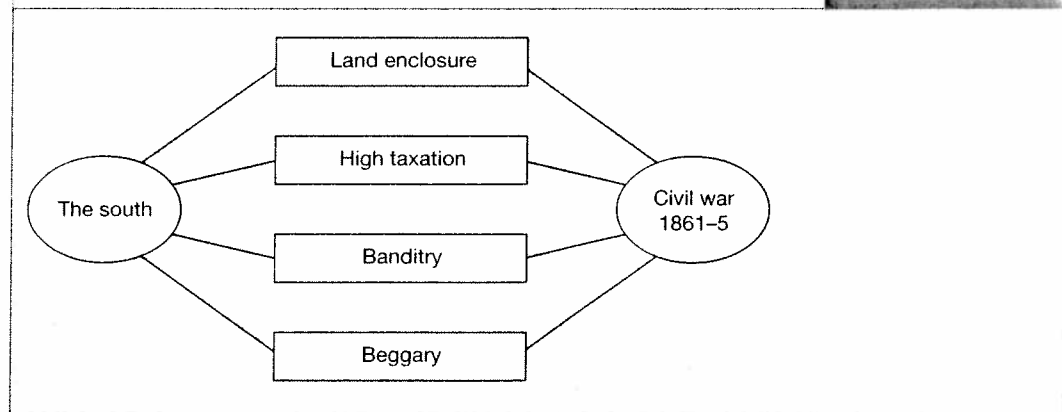
Spinning and weaving in the home had previously involved the whole family, bringing together men, women and children. Factory work destroyed the family as a self-contained production unit and changed the division of labour between men and women. As a result, there was a great increase in the number of babies left at the foundling hospitals to free their mothers for work.

The introduction of mechanised looms in the factories eliminated the heavy work of weaving previously done by men. They found themselves no longer needed and were replaced as weavers by women and girls who were cheaper to employ, often leaving the men without work. This disturbed the long-accepted social relationships within peasant and other working families because, for the first time on any large scale, male domination was challenged as women became independent wage-earners outside the home.

Conclusion

The majority of Italians, men as well as women, must have wondered what was so wonderful about a self-governing and united Italy, as their lot remained arduous and poverty stricken. Was this really the glorious *Risorgimento* they had heard about?

Summary diagram: Social and economic problems



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

- (a) Explain why Italy was not fully unified until 1870. (12 marks)
(b) 'Italy was a strong new state in 1870.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

- (a) You should try to provide a variety of factors to explain why it took so long to unite Italy. You may wish to draw on material from earlier chapters to explain the underlying divisions within Italy that had made unification difficult and you could allude briefly to the limited nature of Cavour's aims and the position of Garibaldi by 1860. You would also need to explain the unique heritage of Venetia and the Papal States where French troops were determined to protect the Pope. You should also include the specific factors that led to the incorporation of Venetia (pages 114–15) and Rome (pages 115–16) and the importance of war.

Try to prioritise and show the links between the reasons you have chosen, perhaps distinguishing between the long- and short-term factors. You should ensure that your answer leads towards a clear and well-supported conclusion.

- (b) This question is asking you to consider the strength of the new Italian state of 1870. You should make a list of points that agree with the statement and another list that disagrees. There are a number of points in this chapter which suggest the new Italian state was actually quite weak, but do ensure you think of some positive points too. By choosing one side over the other and by balancing one set of points against the other you will produce a balanced answer.

In support of the statement you might include:

- a newly united nation with plenty of potential for the future
- united legal codes
- a united army and navy offering the possibility of new military strength
- a single and expanding education system
- a broadly democratic constitution.

Disagreeing with the statement you might include:

- the degree of poverty that existed
- the position of the Papacy
- the inadequacy of the political system
- problems of law and order
- land issues and the north/south divide.

In the style of Edexcel

How far were the Italian governments successful in their attempts to deal with the problems they faced in the period 1861–70? (30 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are designed to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the question.

A logical approach to this question is, first, to identify the problems of the period and, then, to see how successful Italian governments were at tackling them. Your answer might include the following areas:

- Unifying the whole peninsula. Clearly there was success here, in that first Venetia and then Rome became part of the Italian Kingdom. But how far was this due to the efforts of the governments, and how far to luck (see pages 114–16 and 125)?
- Devising a satisfactory constitution for Italy. Did the ‘solution’ adopted work effectively? How far was it too centred on the model of Piedmont to arouse the support and enthusiasm of the whole Italian population (see pages 126–7)?
- Securing co-operation between north and south. Did the policies coming from the politicians in the north help the position of southerners? Why was there a civil war in the south (see pages 128–9)?
- Problems with the Church. Did governments manage to achieve a satisfactory relationship between the state and the Catholic Church (see pages 125–6)?
- The standard of living. Did life become better for the majority of Italians? How did the position of women change (see pages 130–1)?

Your answer should end with a short conclusion, in which you weigh up the successes and failures. What overall verdict will you deliver?

In the style of OCR

Study the four sources and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part (b).

(a) Study Sources B and C.

Compare these sources as evidence for the attitudes of Neapolitans to unification. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources.

Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that Piedmont imposed its authority on Italy from 1860 to 1870 by force of arms. (70 marks)

Source A

A cartoon published in Punch, 17 November 1860 comments on Garibaldi's offer of the Kingdom of Naples to Victor Emmanuel in October 1860.



'RIGHT LEG IN THE BOOT AT LAST.' Garibaldi [kneeling] says, 'If it won't go on Sire, try a little more gunpowder.'

Source B

From: Maxime du Camp, Review of Two Worlds, published in 1862. A Frenchman comments on the reactions of Neapolitans to the creation of Italy.

Neapolitans recognise that Italy has no real capital and no proper frontier to the northeast where it is occupied by an enemy power. Neapolitans accept that improving reforms will follow, but first the government in Piedmont must be helped to make the nation. Everyone is now an Italian and feels it. In 1860, after Garibaldi's arrival at Naples, people at first saw him as just a new master and asked 'What is Italy and what does unity mean?' But I have spoken to many people, including sailors and peasants, and all of them know about Italian unity.

Source C

From: Giacinto De Sivo, Neapolitans in the Eyes of Civilised Nations, published in 1862. A Neapolitan challenges the claims of Piedmont that they have liberated the Kingdom of Naples.

Piedmont has a thirst for power, a desire to destroy and rule. The unity boasted by Piedmont is a lie. Piedmont proclaims 'Away with the Austrian!', yet she enables another foreigner, the French, to penetrate into the heart of Italian lands. Piedmont cries 'Italy!', and makes war on Italians; because she does not want to make Italy – she wants to eat Italy. Our homeland, Naples, is not hostile to Italy but fights against those who say 'Unite Italy in order to rob her'. Naples wants to unite Italy so that she can advance civilisation, not retreat into barbarity.

Source D

From: Graham Darby, The Unification of Italy, published in 2001. A modern historian considers the nature of Italy after 1860.

There seemed to be no alternative to Piedmontisation if Italy was to be prevented from falling apart. Piedmont's institutions were imposed on the peninsula. The Piedmontese constitution was extended to all Italy. The legal system was unified and imposed on all, except Tuscany, by 1865. Piedmont's religious laws formally separated Church and State and inspired the Pope to issue a decree in 1868 forbidding all Catholics to participate in the life of the new state. A unified Italian army was created, including in its number Neapolitan officers.

Source: adapted from OCR, January 2005

Exam tips

Read the 'General Introduction' section at the start of the study guide in Chapter 2, page 46.

- (a) There is plenty here to use to consider how Sources B and C offer evidence on Neapolitan attitudes. One mistake would be to read Sources B and C as real alternatives. If you look closely, Source C has elements that favour unification (and Naples' position in the new Italy) and are in agreement that unification is incomplete. Beyond that common ground is where they diverge. Source B sees the French as the obstacle whereas for Source C it is the Austrians. Equally, they take different views of Piedmont as a help or hindrance to unification. You should also note the tone of each; Source B is optimistic about the future for Italy whereas Source C is pessimistic, seeing Naples as being exploited and in danger of suffering. The situation in Naples at that time (e.g. brigands, expectations after the fall of the Bourbons) might help to explain this scepticism.
- (b) Read the question carefully. What do you have to do? The instruction tells you to *use your own knowledge* – to do what? You have to use it to assess how far the sources support an interpretation on Piedmont's behaviour during the decade 1860–70. So if you write a general answer on Italian unification, and/or write about Garibaldi's earlier exploits in the south, you will score low marks. To 'stay on message' and answer the question, mark those key phrases with a highlighter pen, and re-read them from time to time.

You could start with Source A because it seems to agree with the view given in the question. Garibaldi's victories were achieved in Victor Emmanuel's name, and the cartoon suggests that gunpowder (more force) will be needed to unite Italy properly. Before you sift your knowledge of events in the south in 1860 to see how far that view is supported by the facts, and bring in Sources C and D for further corroboration, look again at Source A. Is that the view that it puts forward?

Garibaldi has put down his sword. Look again at the opinions of Sources B and D on the view put forward in the question: Piedmont imposing its authority by force of arms. According to Source B, Piedmont was a benign power that had the interests of Italy at heart, building the new Italy through progressive reforms. As for the view of Source D, Darby points out that Piedmont was not able to impose its authority in either Naples or Rome on some issues. Further, the means by which Piedmont would be imposing its authority – the new Italian army – is shown in Source D to have been much more than a Piedmontese force. Ask yourself one final question about the 1860s. If force was the key element during those years, was it even Italian? Was it French force that acquired Venetia and Rome for a Piedmontese-led Italy?